

**ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, Poland
2-11 October 2006
Questions for the session 15**

**Tolerance and non discrimination II
Roma/Sinti; Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for Roma and Sinti Issues**

France based Romani NGOs regularly receive complaints from Roma about brutality on behalf of the police. The eviction of Roma from the places they live in, in caravans or in barracks, is made in overt violation of human rights. The use of force without any necessity has become common place during these police missions: the doors are broken, people are taken from the bed (the evictions take place regularly around 6 AM) out of their habitation by force and without giving them the possibility to wear something else, sometimes using tear-gas, children are handcuffed etc.

In many cases, with the pretext of identity control, Roma are racketed by policemen, who take them the passport and the money they have with them, without writing any report. Similar behaviour is also noticed with regard to other populations, and in some cases, the responsible have been condemned. Nevertheless, the phenomenon persists.

On the night of June 19-20th, Vilhelm Covaci, a 20 year old Rom died in a canal in Northern suburb of Paris while trying to escape the police. The circumstances of this event make the death of Mr. Covaci very suspect. Covaci's body remained in the water for four days and when it came at the surface, the police did not allow the parents to look at it. The victim's family started a criminal procedure with "*constitution de partie civile*" that gives it access to the dossier and enables it to take active part in the request of investigation.

In parallel with judiciary procedures, on a letter of June 27th 2006, the Romani NGO "La voix des Rroms" asked to Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister of State, minister of Interior and of territory management, a meeting concerning the Covaci case and also, more generally, the police's attitude towards Roma. Answering to this letter, Mr. Sarkozy notified that « *the numerous constraints of [his] agenda prevent [him] to give a favourable follow-up to the request of meeting* », but concerning the Covaci case, he transmitted the letter to the relevant service. To date, no information has been received by this service.

Question:

The paragraph 27 of the Action Plan recommends to the Participating States to "develop training programs to prevent excessive use of force and to promote awareness of and respect for human rights." The facts exposed here show that the practice in France is contrary to this commitment. Is there any political measure and/or public position taken by French government to stop the raising violence against Roma and Sinti during the last years? If not, is this in the agenda of the government?